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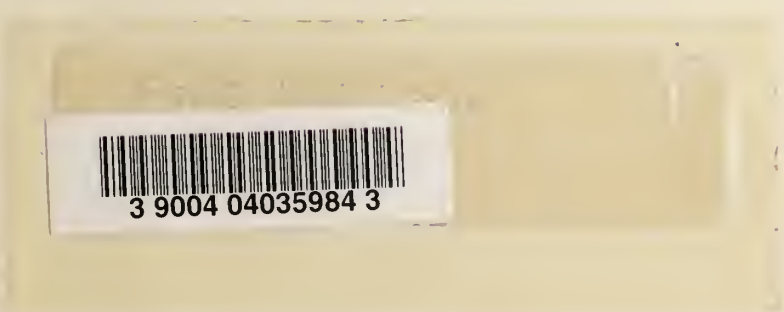
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MINISTERIAL EXPLANATIONS.

PARLIAMENT OF CANADA.

Quebec, 23rd June, 1864.

When the Orders of the Day were called—Hon. Attorney General Macdonald rose to make Ministerial Explanations in regard to the recent negotiations for strengthening the Government. The Attorney General read the following statement of what had passed between the Government and Mr. Brown from the commencement to the close of the negotiations.

"Immediately after the defeat of the Government on Tuesday night, (the 14th,) and on the following morning, Mr. Brown spoke to several supporters of the Administration strongly urging that the present crisis should be utilized in settling forever the constitutional difficulties between Upper and Lower Canada, and assuring them that he was prepared to cooperate with the existing, or any other Administration that would deal with this question promptly and firmly, with a view to its final settlement.

"Messrs. Morris and Pope asked and obtained leave, to communicate these conversations to Mr. John A. Macdonald and Mr. Galt.

"On Thursday, at 3 P. M., just before the Speaker took the chair, Mr. John A. Macdonald said to Mr. Brown, while standing in the centre of the Assembly Room, that he had been informed of what he, Mr. Brown, had stated, and he wished to know if Mr. Brown had any objections to meet Mr. Galt and discuss the matter? He replied, certainly not.

"Mr. Morris accordingly arranged an interview with Mr. Brown, and on Friday, the 17th June, about one P. M., Messrs. Macdonald and Galt called on Mr. Brown at the St. Louis Hotel. Mr. Brown stated that nothing but the extreme urgency of the present crisis, and the hope of settling the sectional troubles of the Province for ever, could, in his opinion, justify their meeting together with a view to common political action. Messrs. Macdonald and Galt were equally impressed with this, and stated that on that footing alone, the present meeting had been invited.

"Mr. Brown asked in what position these Gentlemen came to him, whether as deputed by the Administration or simply as leading Members of the Ministerial party. They replied they were charged by their Colleagues formally to invite his aid in strengthening the Administration with a view to the settlement of the sectional difficulties of Upper and Lower Canada. Mr. Brown then stated that, on grounds purely personal, it was quite impossible that he could be a Member of any Administration at present, and that even had this been otherwise, he would have conceived it highly objectionable that parties who had been so long and so strongly opposed to each other as he and some Members of the Administration had been, should enter the same Cabinet. He thought the public mind would be shocked by such an arrangement, but he felt very strongly that the present crisis presented an opportunity of dealing with this question that might never occur again. Both political parties had tried in turn to govern the Country, but without success, and repeated elections only arrayed sectional majorities against each other more strongly than before. Another general election at this moment presented little hope of a much altered result; and he believed that both parties were far better prepared than they had ever been before, to look the true cause of all the difficulty firmly in the face, and endeavour to settle the Representation question on an equitable and permanent basis. Mr. Brown added that if the Administration were prepared to do this, and would pledge themselves clearly and publicly to bring in a measure next Session that would be acceptable to Upper Canada, the basis to be now settled and announced in Parliament, he would heartily cooperate with them and try to induce his friends (in which he hoped to be successful) to sustain them until they had any opportunity of presenting their measure next Session.

"Mr. Macdonald replied that he considered it would be essential that Mr. Brown himself should become a Member of the Cabinet, with a view to give guarantees to the Opposition and to the Country for the earnestness of the Government.

"Mr. Brown rejoined that other Members of the Opposition could equally with himself, give that guarantee to their party and the Country by entering the Government in the event of a satisfactory basis being arrived at. He felt that his position had been such for many years as to place a greater bar in the way of his entering the Government than in that of any other Member of the Opposition.

"Mr. Macdonald then said that he thought it would be necessary that Mr. Brown himself should, in any case, be identified with the negociations that would necessarily have to take place, and that, if he did not himself enter the Cabinet, he might undertake a Mission to the Lower Provinces, or to England, or both, in order to identify himself with the action of the Canadian Government in carrying out the Measure agreed upon.

"It was then suggested by Mr. Brown, and agreed to, that all questions of a personal character, and the necessary guarantees, should be waived for the present, and the discussion conducted with the view of ascertaining if a satisfactory solution of the sectional difficulty could be agreed upon.

"Mr. Brown asked what the Government proposed as a remedy for the injustice complained of by Upper Canada, and as a settlement of the sectional troubles. Mr. Macdonald and Mr. Galt replied that their remedy was a Federal Union of all the British North American Provinces; local matters being committed to local bodies, and matters common to all to a General Legislature constituted on the well understood principles of Federal Government.

"Mr. Brown rejoined that this would not be acceptable to the people of Upper Canada as a remedy for existing evils. That he believed that Federation of all the Provinces ought to come, and would come about ere long, but it had not yet been thoroughly considered by the people; and even were this otherwise there were so many parties to be consulted, that its adoption was uncertain and remote.

"Mr. Brown was then asked what his remedy was, when he stated that the Measure acceptable to Upper Canada would be Parliamentary Reform, based on population, without regard to a separating line between Upper and Lower Canada.

"To this, both Mr. Macdonald and Mr. Galt stated that it was impossible for them to accede, or for any Government to carry such a Measure, and that, unless a basis could be found on the Federative principle suggested by the Report of Mr. Brown's Committee, it did not appear to them likely that anything could be settled.

"After much discussion on both sides, it was found that a compromise might probably be had in the adoption either of the Federal principle for all the British North American Provinces, as the larger question, or for Canada alone, with provision for the admission of the Maritime Provinces and the North Western territory, when they should express the desire. Mr. Brown contended that the Canadian Federation should be constituted first, in order that such securities might be taken, in regard to the position of Upper Canada, as would satisfy that Section of the Country, that in the negociations with the Lower Provinces, the interests of Upper Canada would in no case be overlooked.

"Further conversation ensued, but as the hour for the meeting of the House had nearly arrived, an understanding was come to that the state of the negociations was such as to warrant the hope of an ultimate understanding; and it was agreed that that fact should be communicated to Parliament, and an adjournment until Monday asked for.

" On Friday evening Mr. Galt saw Mr. Brown and arranged for an interview next morning, at which Sir Etienne Taché and Mr. Cartier should be present.

" On Saturday, at ten A. M., other engagements requiring a change in the hour appointed, Mr. Macdonald and Mr. Galt called on Mr. Brown, and after further discussion, a second appointment was made for one P. M., when the Gentlemen named, with Mr. Cartier, met in the Provincial Secretary's room, Sir Etienne Taché being out of town.

" The consideration of the steps most advisable for the final settlement of the sectional difficulties was then entered upon fully, and a general accord seemed to exist that, as the views of Upper Canada could not be met under our present system the remedy must be sought in the adoption of the federal principle.

" Mr. Brown then requested to have the views of the Administration, as expressed to him, reduced to writing, for the purpose of being submitted confidentially to his friends. The following memorandum was then proposed, and, having to be submitted to the Cabinet and to the Governor General, Mr. Brown enquired whether any objection existed to his seeing His Excellency, whereupon he was informed that no objection whatever existed.

" Mr. Brown accordingly waited on the Governor General, and on his return the memorandum approved by Council and by the Governor General was handed to him and another interview appointed for 6 P. M., Mr. Brown stating that he did not feel at liberty either to accept or reject the proposal without consulting with his friends.

" ' *Memorandum.—Confidential.*

" ' The Government are prepared to state that im-
" ' mediately after the prorogation, they will address
" ' themselves, in the most earnest manner, to the
" ' negociation for a confederation of all the British
" ' North American Provinces.

" ' That failing a successful issue to such negociations
" ' they are prepared to pledge themselves to legislation
" ' during the next Session of Parliament for the pur-
" ' pose of remedying existing difficulties by intro-
" ' ducing the federal principle for Canada alone,
" ' coupled with such provisions as will permit the
" ' Maritime Provinces and the North-Western Terri-
" ' tory to be hereafter incorporated into the canadian
" ' system.

" ' That for the purpose of carrying on the negocia-
" ' tions and settling the details of the promised
" ' legislation, a Royal Commission shall be issued
" ' composed of three members of the government
" ' and three members of the opposition, of whom Mr.
" ' Brown shall be one, and the government pledge
" ' themselves to give all the influence of the Admi-
" ' nistration to secure to the said commission the
" ' means of advancing the great object in view.

" ' That subject to the House permitting the Govern-
" ' ment to carry through the public business, no
" ' dissolution of Parliament shall take place, but
" ' the Administration will again meet the present
" ' House.' "

" Shortly after six P. M. the parties met at the same place when Mr. Brown stated that, without communicating the contents of the confidential paper entrusted to him, he had seen a sufficient number of his friends to warrant him in expressing the belief that the bulk of his friends would, as a compromise, accept a measure for the Federative Union of Canada, with provision for the future admission of the Maritime Colonies and the North-West Territory. To this it was replied that the Administration could not consent to waive the larger question, but after considerable discussion an amendment to the original proposal was agreed to in the following terms, subject to the approval on Monday of the Cabinet, and of His Excellency :

" ' The Government are prepared to pledge them-
" ' selves to bring in a measure, next session, for the
" ' purpose of removing existing difficulties by intro-
" ' ducing the Federal principle into Canada, coupled
" ' with such provision as will permit the Maritime
" ' Provinces and the North-West Territory to be incor-
" ' porated into the same system of Government.

" ' And the Government will seek, by sending Re-
" ' presentatives to the Lower Provinces, and to
" ' England, to secure the assent of those interests
" ' which are beyond the control of our own Legislation
" ' to such a measure as may enable all British North
" ' America to be united under a general Legislature
" ' based upon the Federal principle.' "

" Mr. Brown then stated that having arrived at a basis which he believed would be generally acceptable to the great mass of his political friends, he had to add that, as the proposition was so general in its terms, and the advantage of the measure depended so entirely on the details that might finally be adopted, it was the very general feeling of his friends that security must be given for the fairness of those details and the good faith with which the whole movement would be prosecuted by the introduction into the Cabinet of a fair representation of his political friends. Mr. Brown stated that he had not put this question directly to his friends, but that he perceived very clearly that this was the strong opinion of a large majority of them, and that his own personal opinion on this point (to which he still adhered) was participated in by only a small number. Messrs. Macdonald, Cartier and Galt replied that they had of course understood in proposing that Mr. Brown should enter the Government that he would not come alone, but that the number of seats at his disposal had not been considered by their colleagues. Mr. Brown was requested to state his views on this point, and he replied that the Opposition were half of the House and ought to have an equal influence in the Government. Messrs. Macdonald, Cartier and Galt said this was impossible, but they would see their colleagues and state their views on Monday.

" On Monday, at 10. 30 A. M., Messrs. Macdonald, Cartier and Galt, called on Mr. Brown, at the St. Louis Hotel, and stated that Sir E. P. Taché had returned to town. Mr. Brown accompanied them to the Provincial Secretary's room, when Mr. Brown having been asked to explain how he proposed to arrange equal representation in the cabinet, replied that he desired to be understood as meaning four members for Upper Canada, and two for Lower Canada, to be chosen by the Opposition.

" In reply Messrs. Cartier and Galt stated that as far as related to the constitution of the cabinet for Lower Canada, they believed it already afforded ample guarantees for their sincerity, and that a change in its *personnel* would be more likely to produce embarrassment than assistance, as the majority of the people of Lower Canada, both French Canadians and English, had implicit confidence in their leaders, which it would not be desirable to shake in any way. That in approaching the important question of settling the sectional difficulties, it appeared to them essential that the party led by Sir E. P. Taché, should have ample assurance that their interests would be protected, which, it was feared, would not be strengthened by the introduction into the Cabinet of the Lower Canada opposition.

" Mr. Macdonald stated as regards Upper Canada, that in his opinion the reduction to two of the number of the Gentlemen in the Cabinet who now represented Upper Canada, would involve the withdrawal of the confidence of those who now support them in the House of Assembly, but that he would be prepared for the admission into the Cabinet of three Gentlemen of the Opposition on its being ascertained that they would bring with them a support equal to that now enjoyed by the Government from Upper Canada.

" Mr. Brown asked in what manner it was proposed the six Upper Canada ministers should be selected, was each party to have *carte-blanche* in suggesting to the Head of the Government the names to be chosen ? To which Mr. Macdonald replied that, as a matter of course, he would expect Mr. Brown to be himself a member of the administration, as affording the best, if not the only guarantee, for the adhesion of his friends. That Mr. Macdonald on Mr. Brown giving his consent would confer with him as to the selection of Upper Canada colleagues from both sides, who should be the most acceptable to their respective friends, and most likely to work harmoniously for the great object, which, alone, could justify the arrangement proposed.

" Mr. Brown then enquired what Mr. Macdonald proposed in regard to the Upper Canada leader-ship. Mr. Macdonald said that, as far as he was concerned, he could not with propriety, or without diminishing his usefulness, alter his position, but that he was, as he had been for some time, anxious to retire from the Government, and would be quite ready to facilitate arrangements by doing so. Of course he could not retire from the Government without Sir Etienne Taché's consent.

" Mr. Brown then stated that without discussing the propriety or reasonableness of the proposition, he would consult his friends and give an early reply.

" Tuesday.—The respective parties being occupied during the forenoon in consulting their friends, a meeting was held at two P. M., at which were present Sir E. P. Taché, Mr. Macdonald, Mr. Cartier, Mr. Galt and Mr. Brown.

" Mr. Brown stated that his friends had held a meeting, and approved of the course he had pursued, and the basis arrived at, and authorized him to continue the negociation.

" Mr. Macdonald and Mr. Cartier also said that they had received satisfactory assurances from their friends.

" A further meeting was appointed for half-past eight P. M., at which the details of the arrangements in case Mr. Brown and his friends accepted office, were discussed at much length.

" Mr. Brown contended strongly that the Government should concede a larger representation in the Cabinet than three members. To which it was replied, that the Administration believed it was quite impossible to satisfy their own friends with a different arrangement.

" Mr. Brown then asked whether he could be sworn in as an Executive Councillor, without department or salary,—in addition to the three departmental offices to be filled by his friends. Mr. Macdonald replied that the principle of equality would in this case be destroyed, and he was satisfied it could not be done.

" Mr. Brown asked whether it was a *sine quâ non*, that he should himself enter the Cabinet. To which it was replied that to secure a successful issue to the attempt to settle the sectional difficulties, it was considered that Mr. Brown's acceptance of office was indispensable.

" Mr. Brown then stated that it was now for him to consider what course he should pursue, entertaining as he still did the strongest repugnance to accepting office.

" A meeting was then appointed for the following day.

" On Wednesday, a little after one, the same parties met—when Mr. Brown stated as his final decision, that he would consent to the reconstruction of the Cabinet as proposed, but inasmuch as he did not wish to assume the responsibility of the Government business before the House, he preferred leaving till after the prorogation, the consideration of the acceptance of office by himself and the two gentlemen who might be ultimately selected to enter the Administration with him.

" Sir E. P. Taché and Mr. Macdonald thereon stated that after the prorogation, they would be prepared to place three Seats in the Cabinet at the disposal of Mr. Brown."

2nd Session, 8th Parliament, 27 Victoria, 1864.

MINISTERIAL EXPLANATIONS.

G. Desbarats & M. Cameron, Queen's Printer.

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